



Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on

Albany Primary School

**Albany Road
Roath
CF24 3RR**

Date of inspection: March 2022

by

**Estyn, Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education
and Training in Wales**

About Albany Primary School

Name of provider	ALBANY PRIMARY SCHOOL
Local authority	Cardiff
Language of the provider	English Medium
Type of school	Primary
Religious character	
Number of pupils on roll	434
Pupils of statutory school age	325
Number in nursery classes (if applicable)	51
Percentage of statutory school age pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average <i>(The national percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals over a three-year average in the primary sector is 21.3%)</i>	28.1%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils identified as having additional learning needs (a) <i>(The national percentage of pupils identified as having an additional learning need in the primary sector is 20.6%)</i>	9.2%
Percentage of statutory school age pupils who speak Welsh at home	*
Percentage of statutory school age pupils with English as an additional language	32.3%
Date of headteacher appointment	November 2015
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	27-11-2012
Start date of inspection	28-03-2022
Additional information	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection.

Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

- (a) The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Albany Primary is a diverse and welcoming inner-city school in Cardiff. It is an inclusive school that places its families and the community it serves at the heart of its work. This is particularly important as each year the school sees a significant turnover in its population as families from many parts of the world join and leave the school. Parents very much appreciate the strong support they receive from the school. The information and guidance the school provides for families is a notable feature of its work. As a result, pupils who attend Albany Primary are happy and make good progress from their varying starting points.

The headteacher leads a team of dedicated staff who care for their pupils, support their well-being and encourage them to be the best they can be. The school provides solid support for pupils with additional learning needs and those where English is new or an additional language. Leaders and staff have a clear vision for the development of a purposeful and rounded curriculum. This has its roots in the school's drive to foster pupils' sense of identity within Cardiff and Wales and provides pupils with many opportunities to learn beyond the walls of the school. Staff plan thoughtful and interesting topics for pupils and encourage them to contribute their thoughts and ideas on what they would like to learn.

The headteacher has been effective in developing partnerships with other schools and organisations to improve provision to the benefit of pupils, staff and the wider community. Leaders ensure that there are beneficial opportunities for teachers to develop their practice through professional learning in areas of importance to them and the school, such as the curriculum, well-being and pupil progress. However, self-evaluation processes do not always highlight inconsistencies in teaching and the effectiveness of planning to develop pupils' skills across the school and over time. Overall, the school has a generally suitable approach to health and safety and safeguarding its pupils. However, during the inspection the team raised a few issues with school leaders.

Recommendations

- R1 Address the health and safety issue identified by the team during the inspection
- R2 Ensure that senior leaders robustly monitor and evaluate learning and teaching to identify necessary areas for improvement
- R3 Ensure that the curriculum builds pupils' skills systematically as they move through the school
- R4 Improve the quality of teaching to ensure progression and consistency across the school

What happens next

The school will draw up an action plan to address the recommendations from the inspection.

Main evaluation

Learning

Many pupils begin school with levels of understanding and skills at or below those expected for their age. Each year there is a noticeable turnover in the school's population through new pupils joining, a majority of whom need support with English. Overall, many pupils make effective progress from their individual starting points in many areas of learning. Many pupils for whom English is an additional language reach the expected levels of achievement by the time they leave the school in Year 6. Many pupils use their thinking skills thoughtfully, such as when looking for patterns in numbers, and work creatively when making traditional cures from herbs and spices.

Many pupils develop worthwhile speaking and listening skills. As they progress from nursery to Year 2, they begin to speak to adults and their classmates confidently. They use these skills well to ask questions and share ideas. From Year 3 onwards, pupils listen well to presentations from teachers and other pupils, often joining in discussions and speaking articulately about their research. For example, in Year 6 they explore the difficulties women face in getting promoted in the workplace. Many pupils who need additional support with the English language develop their speaking and listening skills well.

In the nursery, many pupils enjoy looking at and talking about the pictures in books. From reception onwards, a majority begin to gain early reading skills appropriately, such as developing an understanding of letter sounds and using this to sound out short words. Many pupils with English as an additional language develop these skills suitably from their starting points. However, by the end of Year 2, a minority of pupils still have not developed their reading skills strongly enough. In the Year 3 to Year 6 classes, many pupils enjoy reading. They read with suitable fluency and for a sustained period. A majority of pupils recognise how authors use description to make their writing interesting and begin to infer ideas from texts they read. However, a few pupils do not recognise when they read words incorrectly and do not have a broad range of strategies to read unfamiliar words. This means that they do not read for understanding well.

From nursery to Year 2, many pupils write suitably for different purposes in their literacy work and across the curriculum. For example, they write lists of games and activities for their friends to choose a favourite. In many cases, pupils' writing is suitably clear. However, they do not often write at length and a minority struggle to spell basic, familiar words. As they progress through the school, many pupils develop an effective understanding of the different purposes of writing. They structure their writing well, often using interesting descriptions in their stories and imaginative work. However, throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils do not always write well at length or use capital letters and full stops correctly.

Many pupils have basic Welsh language skills. In the nursery and reception classes, they ask and answer simple questions confidently. They learn to count in Welsh and recognise and use simple words, such as colours. By Year 2, they begin to use a few more simple sentence patterns, for example asking others how they are at the start

of each day. From Year 3 onwards, many pupils continue to use their familiar language patterns, for example when talking about where their friends live and ask how they are feeling. In many cases, the answers are simple and short, with only a few pupils developing their answers more fully.

By Year 2, many pupils develop positive mathematical knowledge and skills, and use these in their learning across the curriculum. For example, pupils apply their skills well when weighing fruit as part of their independent play. They use simple data handling skills and collect information in tally charts when investigating favourite cereals. Throughout the older classes, many pupils have effective mathematics and numeracy skills. In Year 3, many pupils subtract efficiently using different methods, for example counting on or using a number line. In Year 4, many pupils use their understanding of multiplication tables well to multiply by larger numbers such as 60, 70 and 90. By Year 6, many pupils transfer their mathematical skills to a variety of contexts successfully, for instance when creating bar charts to show how people travel to school.

Many pupils have good digital skills which they use across the curriculum successfully. In reception, many pupils use simple apps to help develop their communication skills and type a few words to create a party invitation. From nursery to Year 2, many pupils use tablet computers confidently to photograph and upload their work so it can be viewed online. In the older classes, many pupils use their digital skills effectively for research and to record their learning. They create imaginative presentations, with added music to share their findings on religious celebrations, such as Ramadan.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

The relationships between pupils and adults across the school are highly effective. Nearly all pupils are proud members of 'team Albany' and have a strong sense of place in their diverse school. Nearly all new pupils settle well and quickly become active members of the school community and enjoy their learning. Nearly all pupils have a sound understanding of the school rules and know these are in place to ensure everyone is safe and can learn. As a result, nearly all pupils behave well during lessons and feel safe at school. Those pupils who need extra help to manage their emotions benefit well from the range of support they receive.

Many pupils show a good understanding of healthy eating and identify important food groups when creating healthy meals and snacks. For example, pupils in Year 2 apply their knowledge well when helping Red Riding Hood to create a healthy meal to make Grandma better. Nearly all pupils develop as healthy individuals and consider thoughtfully the way they travel to school and the impact this may have on their health and the environment. For example, they make sensible choices to become more physically active by persuading their parents to drive part of the way to school and walk the rest.

Nearly all pupils are developing positive attitudes and becoming more ethically informed with a majority speaking confidently about their rights as children. They contribute to the planning of special days to celebrate rights and diversity, such as a languages day to celebrate the wide range of languages spoken at the school and across the world. Nearly all pupils enjoy taking part in these special days and recognise how this makes others feel valued.

The pupil voice group, Y Senedd Albany, is recommencing its work following a pause during the pandemic. This group is effective in enhancing the facilities and activities available in the playground. As a result, many pupils now take part in a wider range of physical activities during breaktime and lunchtimes, such as football and hula hooping. However, within these groups, over-direction from staff limits pupils' opportunities to develop their leadership skills.

Nearly all pupils are developing well as capable and aspirational learners. In their lessons, many pupils engage well in their learning and remain focused for extended periods of time. Most pupils are persistent when working at new and unfamiliar tasks, often solving problems with increasing amounts of skill. For example, nearly all pupils in Year 6 persevere when designing and making a stable bridge for a ship to pass underneath. Many pupils complete useful weekly evaluations of their learning that help inform their activities for the following week. The majority of pupils talk about aspects of the four purposes of the Curriculum for Wales and discuss with their teachers what they would like to learn next. Most pupils show pride in their work and react positively to the feedback they get from their peers and adults and use this to help them make suitable improvements.

Nearly all pupils know how to stay safe online and can explain why this is important. During periods of lockdown when pupils were unable to attend school, many enjoyed collaborating electronically with their classmates, for example taking part in a virtual sports day. Since returning to school pupils have re-established their friendships well and enjoy safely rediscovering their locality to enhance their well-being and learning. However, while pupils enjoy coming to school, almost a quarter arrive late at the start of each day. As a result, their learning does not start on time and they miss out on useful opportunities to start the day well.

Owing to the coronavirus pandemic, inspectors will not report pupils' rates of attendance during the academic years 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Inspectors will, however, consider the school's provision for monitoring and improving attendance as part of inspection area 4 (care, support and guidance).

Teaching and learning experiences

The school is making good progress towards implementing a curriculum that reflects the principles and culture of the Curriculum for Wales. Leaders and staff work collaboratively with pupils, parents and governors to create and share a vision for their curriculum. From their research and trialing of new ideas, staff produce suitable plans to provide interesting learning experiences that take account of the school's specific context within a significantly transient community in Wales's capital city.

Teachers' planning sets out clearly termly topics for each year group. They work with pupils to choose topics for teaching across the six areas of learning and experience. This structure helps the school to ensure that there is a balance of learning experiences across the whole of the curriculum. Although teachers provide opportunities for pupils to develop literacy, numeracy and digital skills, currently these opportunities do not always build skills systematically to secure progression in lessons and over time.

Overall, the school's curriculum is broad and balanced and offers pupils a suitable range of opportunities that encourage pupils to explore and learn. All topics begin with a motivating launch day. For example, Year 2 pupils visited St Fagan's to start their Wonderful Wales topic and Year 4 visited Leckwith Stadium to launch their topic, Champions. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to influence what they want to learn. For example, as part of their autumn topic on biodiversity, older pupils successfully steered lessons to learn more about endangered animals. In addition, the curriculum includes theme days that focus on topics such as Fairtrade and celebrations that are important to the school's community, including Ramadan, Eid and Diwali. This supports pupils to develop a better understanding of the diverse nature of Wales and the wider world.

The school enriches its curriculum with a range of visits and visitors to school. Teachers make very good use of the school minibus to transport pupils to places of interest, such as Forest Fawr to enjoy forest school activities, and Heath Park for orienteering. Visits from the fire service and opportunities for many pupils to sing in Cardiff Children's Choir enable pupils to develop their well-being, creativity and collaboration with others. The school grounds further enhance curriculum provision for games, physical education and the development of pupils' co-ordination skills. However, whilst the majority of pupils can access outdoor learning on a daily basis, planning for use of the outdoor areas to enhance pupils' experiences, particularly for younger pupils, is limited. This lessens opportunities for the development of pupils' wider skills, for example their physical skills and creativity.

All staff work together successfully to build positive working relationships with pupils, creating welcoming, purposeful, and supportive learning environments. This contributes to a calm working environment where pupils feel listened to and can ask questions if they need help with their learning. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and most pupils are engaged and remain on task during lessons. Most pupils are suitably challenged in their work. For example, pupils in Year 3 are beginning to develop the ability to select tasks appropriate to their level of ability and the next steps of their learning. Pupils choose the level of challenge they undertake and are encouraged to attempt the next level if they complete their tasks well.

Across the school the majority of lessons move at a steady pace. However, on occasions, teachers spend too much time setting up activities whilst pupils wait to begin their work. Overall, pupils engage well during lessons, and many are keen and enjoy their learning. In most classes, teachers use questioning well to move pupils' learning on and support understanding, according to the needs of pupils. Teachers deploy support staff thoughtfully to assist the development of pupils' skills and well-being. Staff are sensitive to pupils' needs, allowing them to explore and make mistakes before stepping in to offer support.

The school makes good use of assessment procedures to track pupil progress in areas of learning as they journey through the school. There are regular pupil progress meetings that include leaders, class teachers and the additional learning needs co-ordinator. These meetings discuss the progress and well-being of individual pupils and, if required, how provision can be adapted to support improvement. Across the school there are suitable approaches to providing worthwhile responses to pupils' work. Where practice is good in the youngest classes, teachers monitor pupils' learning effectively and provide them with helpful verbal feedback to improve

their work and extend their learning. Across classes from Year 3 to Year 6, pupils have opportunities to respond and make suggestions on how to improve their own work and support their peers before receiving feedback from their teachers. However, the quality of feedback across the school is variable and does not always assist pupils to improve their work and develop their skills.

Care, support and guidance

All staff place a high priority on the well-being of pupils. They know their pupils very well and meet their social and emotional needs highly effectively. This strong focus on improving pupil well-being is a key aspect of the school's provision.

During the pandemic the school responded rapidly to emerging challenges to help ensure the well-being of all pupils and their families. Leaders and staff made regular contact with pupils and their families to provide support, for example by providing food parcels and translating important information for those new to English.

The school's provision for pupils with additional learning needs is also an important strength. As a result, by the end of Year 6 most pupils requiring additional support make the expected level of progress from their starting points. The school has robust procedures to identify pupils' additional needs. The school's additional learning needs co-ordinator, along with class teachers, ensures that there is swift identification and support for pupils with ALN and tailored provision to meet their individual needs. The school works with a wide range of external agencies highly effectively. All pupils on the school's ALN register have useful pupil profiles and these focus clearly on important information about their individual needs. All pupils with a statement of special educational needs have informative plans, which staff review and update in annual meetings. These meetings focus appropriately on what is working well and what could be working better to support pupils to make progress.

The school has suitable provision for pupils with English as an additional language. Staff work well collaboratively to identify the language needs of pupils and plan targeted support. Prior to the pandemic, this included visits to local shops and other aspects of the local community to allow pupils the chance to practise their language skills. Currently, support mostly takes the form of effective small intervention groups. As a result, most pupils with English as an additional language make good progress over time.

The school promotes a strong sense of identity and community. For example, pupils learn the school song and school prayer, which both celebrate 'Team Albany'. The school recognises the wide range of cultures and faiths represented across their community. In daily acts of collective worship, staff provide pupils with the opportunity to reflect on the key message and how it may apply to their culture or faith. In addition, the school holds celebrations at Eid and Christmas as well as celebrating 'Mother Language Day'. These activities successfully promote pupils' awareness and understanding of other faiths and cultures. In addition, staff encourage pupils to participate in local community activities such as designing a local church garden, decorating the school gates to celebrate Remembrance Day, maintaining the Albany Military Hospital website and hosting the biannual Albany Military Hospital exhibition in the school. These activities contribute to the strong links between the school and the local community.

The school celebrates its Welsh heritage positively. Staff arrange visits to the local landmarks and places of interest, such as Roath Park, museums and beaches. They also devise activities based on the local area, for example the topic 'we built this city', linked with an art project about Cardiff. In addition, the school holds events to celebrate St. David's Day, including the annual Eisteddfod.

There are a few opportunities for a few pupils to develop their leadership skills by taking on additional responsibilities, such as becoming a member of Y Senedd Albany. The lack of opportunities prevents many pupils from actively contributing to decisions made about the work of the school.

A few aspects of the school's safeguarding culture are not robust enough. There is an established system to report safeguarding concerns regarding pupils and the school makes timely referrals to outside agencies when appropriate. The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and delivers regular safeguarding updates. However, a few non-teaching staff, along with those not directly employed by the school, are not aware of who to report to if they have concerns about senior staff. In addition, a health and safety issue was raised with the school.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is instrumental in creating and sustaining a welcoming and inclusive community with pupil well-being at its heart. This is an outstanding feature of the work of the school. This focus is particularly important because of the high levels of mobility of families within the community and the school. Staff and pupils at the school support and welcome a significant number of new starters each year across all age groups. These new pupils settle quickly and comfortably into life at Albany Primary, embracing 'the Albany way'. Parents value the comprehensive support the school provides, including for any emerging needs their children may have, and appreciate the way in which it communicates important information to them.

The headteacher has led the creation of a clear vision for the school's curriculum, based on enabling the best each pupil can be. Staff embrace the mantra of 'every child, every day, in every possible way'. Members of the school's wider senior leadership team are making the Curriculum for Wales a reality through their wider research and innovation.

Leaders carefully link national priorities with the needs of their school community and, when possible, provide pupils with a range of engaging learning activities away from the school. Members of the wider senior leadership team work closely with all staff to create the school development plan and important actions for improvement. For example, following the evaluation of provision during the pandemic, leaders discovered that pupils had limited opportunities for developing their skills in creativity and in the expressive arts. As a result of this, they now provide pupils with specialist music lessons to enhance these skills. Senior leaders work together on developing new approaches. For example, they gather assessment information from classroom observations and talking to pupils to create useful portfolios of pupils' progress in learning over time.

Leaders work suitably to gather useful information from across the school to identify strengths and areas for development. However, recent monitoring activities of the school's provision lack rigour. As a result, leaders do not have enough first-hand knowledge of the school's priorities for improvement. For instance, leaders have not addressed the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the impact this has on pupils.

Members of the governing body are highly supportive of their school. They discharge their duties well over a range of committees, often bringing useful expertise to their roles. The headteacher keeps them up to date with developments at the school. However, they have a limited understanding of pupil progress and the school's developing curriculum and this restricts their ability to hold the school to account and fulfil their duty as a critical friend. Leaders manage finances well, with the pupil development grant spent appropriately on enriching pupils' experiences through their curriculum and developing a sense of identity and belonging to Cardiff. For example, the grant finances the school's minibus which is in constant use, visiting nearby landmarks, including Cardiff Castle. Overall, leaders have a focus on supporting its pupils and their well-being, by working appropriately with pupils, parents and governors to promote an effective culture of safeguarding with sound arrangements for healthy eating and drinking.

The headteacher is keen to nurture staff at all levels and support their professional learning. Over recent years they have worked well with partners at Cardiff University to develop highly personalised professional projects, which link to developing pupils' well-being and standards. This work requires teachers to identify an area they would like to study and improve within their class. Following a period of research, teachers implement their strategy and monitor the impact on pupils, for example devising approaches to improving relationships between pupils. This enables teachers to develop important research skills that they use for their own continuous improvement. Teachers enjoy working on these projects and this has had a positive impact on staff well-being. In addition, they work successfully with colleagues in other schools on beneficial projects, such as new approaches to assessment and improving pupil outcomes.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from the parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and the governing body through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors, senior and middle leaders (where appropriate) and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work, to listen to them read and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit a broad sample of classes, including learning support groups and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning and to see staff teaching in a range of settings, including classrooms, support groups and in outdoor areas
- where appropriate, visit the specialist resource base within the school to see pupils' learning
- observe and speak to pupils at lunch and break times and at a sample of after-school clubs, where appropriate
- attend assemblies and daily acts of collective worship
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school has taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body, information on pupils' wellbeing, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website (www.estyn.gov.wales)

The report was produced in accordance with Section 28 of the Education Act 2005.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

Publications Section

Estyn

Anchor Court, Keen Road

Cardiff

CF24 5JW or by email to publications@estyn.gov.wales

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